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Sustainable development: protection of global climate for present and future generations of humankind

Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

Convention on Biological Diversity

Implementation of United Nations environmental conventions

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the General Assembly the following reports submitted by the secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

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I. Report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention

A. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 72/219 on the protection of the global climate for present and future generations of humankind, invited the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to report, through the Secretary-General, to the Assembly at its seventy-third session, on the work of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention. The present report has been prepared in response to that invitation.

B. Outcomes of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties, the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the second part of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement

1. Summary

2. The United Nations Climate Change Conference, presided over by the Government of Fiji, was held in Bonn, Germany, from 6 to 17 November 2017 and comprised the following sessions:

(a) Twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention;

(b) Thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol;

(c) Forty-seventh session of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation;

(d) Forty-seventh session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice;

(e) Resumed session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Paris Agreement.

3. The Conference enjoyed a high level of participation and was attended by 9,196 government delegates from 194 parties to the Convention, representatives of 1 observer State; 5,543 observers, including representatives from 35 entities of the United Nations Secretariat, 21 specialized agencies and related organizations, 75 intergovernmental organizations and 953 non-governmental organizations (NGOs); and 1,283 media representatives.

4. The Conference delivered significant results across all bodies: the Conference of the Parties adopted 22 decisions, the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol adopted 7 decisions and the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement adopted procedural conclusions. Significant progress was achieved at the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties, and announcements were made by Governments, local governments, the private sector and other non-party State actors to accelerate their implementation of climate action.

5. The parties advanced the development of their guidelines for the implementation of the Paris Agreement, which are to be completed at the end of 2018, came together on the individual elements under negotiation to operationalize the Agreement, agreed on the overall structure of the outcome of the twenty-fourth

session of the Conference of the Parties to be held in December later in 2018 in Katowice, Poland, and clarified the plan for the final year of these complex negotiations. The above progress provides a solid foundation for completing the work on the guidelines by the agreed deadline.

6. The parties established a firm basis for ambitious action in the form of an inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue conducted in the spirit of the Pacific tradition of Talanoa, aimed at building empathy and trust that results in better decision-making for the collective good. The Talanoa Dialogue is a mandated process requested by the parties to the 2015 Paris Agreement c, to conduct a dialogue to inform the next round of nationally determined contributions and to respond to the special report on global warming of 1.5°C by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. That report is, to be released in advance of the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties.

7. Significant decisions were adopted to build momentum for the implementation of measures to combat climate change, including action to advance efforts undertaken by local communities and indigenous peoples platform, action on gender issues, and agreements on joint projects to improve efforts in the agriculture sector, as well as decisions on loss and damage associated with climate change impacts and on climate finance, capacity-building and technology.

8. On climate finance, funding announcements, including those by Germany and Italy, ensured that the Adaptation Fund exceeded its 2017 target by over $13 million, bringing the funding total to $93.3 million. On the topic of long-term finance, countries welcomed progress and urged greater efforts to deliver the agreed $100 billion per year by 2020 in support for the efforts of developing countries to take action to combat climate change.

9. The twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties achieved historic breakthroughs on the operationalization of the local communities and indigenous peoples platform, which aims to support the full and equal role of indigenous people in climate action while recognizing the responsibility of Governments to respect the rights of indigenous peoples in those decisions, as well as establishing a gender action plan, which aims to make women a part of all climate change projects and decisions nationally and internationally. A further breakthrough was made to advance efforts on agriculture and food security in the context of climate change.

10. An agreement was also reached on the delivery of commitments under the Convention, including the mobilization of climate finance, and under the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2018 and 2019.

2. High-level segment and events of the presidency of the Conference of the Parties

11. The joint high-level segment of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties, the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and part two of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement was opened by the President of the Conference of the Parties, the Prime Minister of Fiji, Frank Bainimarama.

12. The Secretary-General and other dignitaries delivered statements focusing on increasing the ambition and advancing the implementation of actions under the Paris Agreement, and recognizing the need to take decisive steps towards achieving its full implementation.

13. The Secretary-General highlighted the need for countries to accelerate their efforts in a spirit of collaboration, and reiterated the need for leadership from Heads of State and Governments and other stakeholders, and for the engagement of all sectors of society to work together to urgently take decisive climate action.

14. During the high-level segment, 142 statements were delivered, of which 9 were by Heads of State, 4 by Deputy Heads of State, 93 by ministers, 7 by deputy ministers, and 29 by heads of delegation. Statements were also made by representatives of 23 observer constituencies, including indigenous peoples organizations trade unions, women and gender NGOs, youth NGOs, business and industry NGOs, environmental NGOs, research and independent NGOs, faith-based NGOs, local governments, municipal authorities and intergovernmental and regional organizations.

15. Pursuant to its decision 1/CP.20, the Conference of the Parties convened a high-level event on accelerating climate action to: further strengthen high-level engagement on implementation;, announce new or strengthened voluntary efforts, initiatives and coalitions; report on progress made by new or strengthened voluntary efforts, initiatives and coalitions; and engage dignitaries from parties to the Convention, international organizations, international cooperative initiatives and non-party stakeholders.

16. Under the guidance of the presidency of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties, five high-level events on the following topics were convened during the Conference: resilience and risk insurance; on United Nations policy coherence and joint delivery to support low-emission and climate resilient development at the national level; health actions for the implementation of the Paris Agreement; integrating human rights into climate action; and long-term strategies to 2050 for prosperity and a safe climate. These events explored each topic in the context of increasing the shared global ambition to combat climate change, in particular, immediate action and collaboration as well as action to implement the Paris Agreement. Participants at these events represented a spectrum of leaders, including Heads of State and Government, ministers, principals of international organizations and innovators and influencers from the private sector and civil society. Through these events, participants highlighted the actions being taken at all levels of society that are contributing to enhanced climate action, and helping national Governments to implement their commitments.

B. Outcomes of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties

17. The following decisions were adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its twenty-third session:

(a) 1/CP.23: Fiji Momentum for Implementation;

(b) 2/CP.23: Local communities and indigenous peoples platform;

(c) 3/CP.23: Establishment of a gender action plan;

(d) 4/CP.23: Koronivia joint work on agriculture;

(e) 5/CP.23: Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts;

(f) 6/CP.23: Long-term climate finance;

(g) 7/CP.23: Report of the Standing Committee on Finance;

(h) 8/CP.23: Review of the functions of the Standing Committee on Finance;

(i) 9/CP.23: Report of the Green Climate Fund to the Conference of the Parties and guidance to the Green Climate Fund;

(j) 10/CP.23: Report of the Global Environment Facility to the Conference of the Parties and guidance to the Global Environment Facility;

(k) 11/CP.23: Sixth review of the Financial Mechanism;

(l) 12/CP.23: Process to identify the information to be provided by the parties in accordance with article 9, paragraph 5, of the Paris Agreement;

(m) 13/CP.23: Assessment of the technical examination processes on mitigation and adaptation;

(n) 14/CP.23: Review of the effective implementation of the Climate Technology Centre and Network;

(o) 15/CP.23: Enhancing climate technology development and transfer through the Technology Mechanism;

(p) 16/CP.23: Annual technical progress report of the Paris Committee on Capacity-building for 2017;

(q) 17/CP.23: Fourth review of the implementation of the framework for capacity-building in countries with economies in transition;

(r) 18/CP.23: Scope of the next periodic review of the long-term global goal under the Convention and of overall progress towards achieving it;

(s) 19/CP.23: Training programme for review experts for the technical review of biennial reports and national communications of the parties included in annex I to the Convention;

(t) 20/CP.23: Administrative, financial and institutional matters;

(u) 21/CP.23: Programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019;

(v) 22/CP.23: Dates and venues of future sessions.

4. Outcomes of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol

18. The following decisions were adopted by the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol at its thirteenth session:

(a) 1/CMP.13: Report of the Adaptation Fund Board;

(b) 2/CMP.13: Third Review of the Adaptation Fund;

(c) 3/CMP.13: Guidance relating to the clean development mechanism;

(d) 4/CMP.13: Fourth review of the implementation of the framework for capacity-building in countries with economies in transition under the Kyoto Protocol;

(e) 5/CMP.13: Administrative, financial and institutional matters;

(f) 6/CMP.13: Programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019;

(g) 7/CMP.13: Budget for the international transaction log and a methodology for the collection of its fees for the biennium 2018–2019.

5. Outcomes of the second part of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement

19. The report of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement on the second part of its first session can be found in document FCCC/PA/CMA/2017/2.[1]

6. Conclusions and recommendations

20. The General Assembly may wish, inter alia:

(a) To take note of the report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as transmitted by the Secretary-General;

(b) To note the outcomes of the twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties, the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the second part of first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, presided over by the Government of Fiji, and held in Bonn, Germany, from 6 to 17 November 2017;

(c) To urge parties to the Paris Agreement that have not yet done so to deposit their instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, where appropriate, as soon as possible to ensure its universality;

(d) To urge parties to deposit their instruments of acceptance to ensure the prompt entry into force of the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol;

(e) To urge parties to conclude the work programme under the Paris Agreement as soon as possible and to forward their outcomes, at the latest, to the third part of the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement, to be convened in conjunction with the twenty-fourth session of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Katowice, Poland, in 2018, for its consideration and adoption;

(f) To invite the Executive Secretary to continue to report to it on the work of the Conference of the Parties, Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol and the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement.

II. Report of the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

A. Introduction

21. In its resolution 72/220, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its seventy-third session on the implementation of that resolution. The present report provides an update for the Assembly on the principal activities that have been undertaken in that respect.

[1] Available at: https://unfccc.int/process/conferences/un-climate-change-conference-november-2017/sessions-of-negotiating-bodies/cma-1-2.

B. Implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/220

1. Outcome of the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and its subsidiary bodies

22. The thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, the sixteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the thirteenth session of the Committee on Science and Technology to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification were held in Ordos, China, from 6 to 16 September 2017. The Conference of the Parties adopted 36 decisions and 1 resolution during the session (see ICCD/COP(13)/21/Add.1).

23. The Conference of the Parties held a high-level segment on 11 and 12 September 2017, which included three parallel ministerial high-level round tables and three interactive dialogue sessions, which concluded with the adoption of the Ordos Declaration. The Conference also held an open dialogue session, on the theme "Land and climate", which concluded with the adoption of a declaration of civil society organizations.

24. Significant decisions adopted at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties included, decision 3/COP.13, in which the Conference requested the secretariat, the Global Mechanism and the appropriate bodies of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, including the Science-Policy Interface, within their respective mandates, to contribute to the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development by engaging with and facilitating participation in regional meetings and other activities leading up to the 2018 political forum, as well as by providing inputs to the forum highlighting countries' progress towards the implementation of the Convention and, as appropriate, the achievement of their voluntary land degradation neutrality targets.

25. At its thirteenth session, the Conference also adopted the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, a comprehensive global commitment to achieve land degradation neutrality by restoring the productivity of vast swathes of degraded land, improving the livelihoods of more than 1.3 billion people and reducing the impact of drought on vulnerable populations. The Strategic Framework not only provides guidance to the parties on how to implement the Convention, it also serves as a monitoring tool for the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention in its assessment of the implementation efforts taken by the parties. Under the Strategic Framework, the parties will report on the progress towards five strategic objectives related to the condition of ecosystems and populations, drought, global environmental benefits and the mobilization of financial and non-financial resources to support the implementation of the Convention. The parties will also share experiences on actual implementation efforts related to financial and non-financial resources, policy and planning, and actions on the ground. The progress towards the strategic objectives will be measured through indicators. With a view to decreasing the reporting burden, the parties will receive templates prepopulated with default data on the three biophysical indicators (namely, trends in land cover, trends in land productivity and trends in carbon stocks above and below ground), including associated metrics. Information on those indicators will also be used to inform processes for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, target 15.3.

26. At its thirteenth session, the Conference renewed the mandate of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention as a standing subsidiary body of the Conference (see decision 13/COP.13), including its terms of reference,

operations and schedule of meetings. Furthermore, a four-year reporting frequency for countries to provide information on the strategic objectives and the implementation framework of the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework were approved by the Conference in its decision 15/COP.13.

27. Also at its thirteenth session, the Conference mandated, the continued exploration of innovative financing mechanisms and funding options, including for technical assistance in support of the preparation of transformative projects and programmes. It also called for the scaling-up of support to the parties in collaboration with multilateral development banks, international development finance institutions and climate finance institutions, including the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund.

28. In its decision 18/COP.13, the Conference endorsed the scientific conceptual framework for land degradation neutrality, called upon parties pursuing land degradation neutrality to consider the guidance provided by the conceptual framework and requested the Science-Policy Interface to analyse the land degradation neutrality implementation experience based on a case study synthesis.

29. Other decisions, including 28/COP.13, 29/COP.13, 30/COP.13 and 31/COP.13, addressed other core sectoral issues of direct relevance to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, including migration, drought, gender and sand and dust storms.

2. Follow-up to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

Preparations for the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development

30. To prepare for the 2018 high-level political forum on sustainable development and its review of Sustainable Development Goal 15, the secretariat participated in and contributed to a number of activities.

31. On 13 March 2018, on the margins of the ministerial session of the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification assisted the Group of Friends on desertification, land degradation and drought in organizing a high-level event entitled "Empowerment of rural women by addressing land degradation and drought". The key messages that emerged from the event included the fact that while land degradation is a problem that affects all regions, it has a gender component; every year, 12 million hectares of productive land become barren as a result of desertification, land degradation and drought. This impacts the livelihoods of the poor and vulnerable, especially women, since agriculture is the most important source of employment for women in rural areas. Areas affected by land degradation, desertification and drought also frequently experience acute water scarcity, which disproportionately affects women and girls, who are often tasked with collecting water for drinking and other family needs.

32. The secretariat also contributed to an expert group meeting on different aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 15, (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss), which was convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and held at Headquarters in New York on 14 and 15 May 2018 in preparation for the 2018 high-level political forum. The session on land and soils assembled a range of experts from academia, civil society and United Nations entities, and was moderated by a representative of the secretariat. The key messages that emerged from the expert group meeting included the message that achieving land degradation neutrality constituted an accelerator to achieve other Sustainable Development Goals and responded to the overall objective of 2030

Agenda for Sustainable Development of leaving no one behind. Furthermore, since many Sustainable Development Goals were directly linked to that objective, land degradation neutrality could also serve to integrate action on a range of Goals, targets and indicators. Participants at the meeting also noted that the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund, the first fund of its kind, had been established to prove that sustainable land management could be profitable, and thus had attracted the interest of the private sector and delivered on multiple fronts. Participants also noted that, as of 2018, the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme had a subscription of 120 countries. The establishment of the Target Setting Programme, which was evidence of substantial progress in this area, needed to be operationalized through transformative and large-scale projects so that Member States could achieve land degradation neutrality. Among its main messages, the expert group meeting stressed that the scope and duration of droughts worldwide are increasing as a result of climate change and that, if Sustainable Development Goal 15 is to be achieved, droughts must be aggressively managed and addressed to ensure the preparedness and resilience of affected ecosystems and communities.

3. Target-setting on land degradation neutrality

33. At the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties, it was agreed to integrate the Sustainable Development Goals and related targets into the implementation of the Convention. The parties decided that striving to achieve target 15.3 was a strong vehicle for driving the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (see decision 3/COP.12). In order to enable the Convention to "make a significant contribution to achieving land degradation neutrality", as part of the overall discussion on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Conference invited all parties to "formulate voluntary targets to achieve land degradation neutrality" and to explore options on how to integrate the voluntary land degradation neutrality targets into their national action plans (see decision 3/COP.12). In responding to this request, the Global Mechanism of the Convention launched the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme in October 2015. Through the Programme, the Global Mechanism provided four core support activities: (a) based on the scientific guidance provided by the Science-Policy Interface, the lessons learned from the land degradation neutrality pioneer countries and the feedback received from countries and stakeholders, the Mechanism developed the building blocks for land degradation neutrality target-setting as a practical approach to putting the evolving concept of land degradation neutrality into practice; (b) all countries with default data on the three indicators of the land degradation neutrality monitoring framework, as part of which a number of countries received additional disaggregated data at the watershed level, including high-resolution data for small island States; (c) a set of workshops targeting the national teams leading the land degradation neutrality target-setting were conducted; and (d) the achievements of the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme were reported to the parties during the sixteenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties.

34. Through the Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Programme, countries are using land degradation neutrality as a lens to: foster coherence among national policies, actions and commitments; develop transformative projects creating multiple benefits; and tap into increasing financing opportunities, combining public and private, national and international resources, including climate finance. As at July 2018, 118 countries were participating in the Programme, with more than 60 countries having already established their national land degradation neutrality targets.

4. Land Degradation Neutrality Fund

35. Taking into account the recognition that sustainability and the move towards a new paradigm on land management require a new model of private sector engagement, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification spearheaded the creation of the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund. The Fund was established as a socially responsible impact fund strongly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular target 15.3, related to achieving land degradation neutrality. Managed by a private investment manager, the Fund will draw on both public and private resources to support financially viable sustainable land management and land conservation and restoration projects worldwide, by providing long-term financing and applying strict environmental and social standards. Focusing on revenue-generating projects led by the private sector, the Fund will invest in a range of projects, from sustainable agriculture projects targeting small landowners and rural cooperatives to agroforestry projects in rehabilitated lands, which contribute to the promotion of land degradation neutrality and the creation of decent jobs and livelihoods for the most vulnerable. The Fund is expected to be fully operational by the end of 2018.

5. World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

36. The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is observed every year on 17 June to raise awareness about the status of land resources, in particular at the country level and to mobilize required actions. In 2018, the global observance event for the Day was organized in Quito and was hosted by the Government of Ecuador under the theme "Land has true value — Invest in it." The objective of the event was to create awareness about the need to move away from unsustainable land use and make a difference by investing in the future of land. Approximately 100 local and international participants attended the event, which included five ministers and a vice minister who showcased Ecuador's land degradation neutrality policies and practices at a ministerial round-table.[2]

37. At the time of writing, 80 governmental, intergovernmental and civil society organizations had sent reports on their observance events to the secretariat, in which they described unique activities such as cultural performances by indigenous groups, donations, youth engagement events and a new product launch by a private company.[3]

6. United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification

38. During the period under consideration, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification produced awareness-raising and educational materials focused on emerging issues linked to desertification, land degradation and drought and practical solutions thereto. The Task Force also provided technical expertise in the development of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Gender Action Plan for 2018–2030. The thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties also welcomed the progress in the implementation of the General Assembly resolution on the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification.

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[2] The report of the global observance event is available from the secretariat's website: www.unccd.int/actions/17-june-world-day-combat-desertification/2018wdcd-global-observance-ecuador.

[3] The reports are available from the secretariat's website: www.unccd.int/actions/17-june-world-day-combat-desertification/2018wdcd-events-around-world.

7. Collaboration with the Global Environment Facility

39. The seventh replenishment of the Global Environment Facility concluded at the sixth Assembly held in Da Nang, Viet Nam, on 27 and 28 June 2018. The Assembly replenished financial resources amounting to $4.1 billion with the land degradation focal area receiving a 10 per cent increase in resource allocation. During the deliberations, the panel of ministers, senior government officials and other experts carried out interactive discussions on several themes. Two round tables were of direct relevance to the Convention. At the first round table, participants discussed food, and land use and restoration, while at the second they discussed sustainable drylands.

40. Also during the sixth Assembly, the Global Environment Facility Council approved the new memorandum of understanding with the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, as set out in decision 11/COP.13. The new document supersedes the one in place since 2005. The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Chief Executive Officer and Chair of the Global Environment Facility have been invited to sign the new memorandum on behalf of the governing bodies of the two processes.

8. Partnerships

41. The parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification are strongly committed to effective delivery through partnerships at all levels. With the adoption of the revised 2018–2030 Strategic Framework at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, a number of innovative partnerships are being developed to help drive forward the implementation of the Convention.

42. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification participates in the Group on Earth Observations. In its decision 9/COP.13, the Conference of the Parties invited the Group to assist its contracting parties with the rapid provision and deployment of Earth observation datasets, country support, capacity-building and training, along with tools and platforms so that countries can effectively monitor and report on land degradation neutrality targets and indicator 15.3.1. The Group has since established a community activity. This is expected to become a full-fledged land degradation neutrality initiative approved by the plenary of the Group on Earth Observations in October 2018.[4]

43. While working to support reporting under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification process and target 15.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the secretariat is also working with Conservation International to develop an accessible tool to measure progress towards a land degradation neutral world using indicator 15.3.1.

44. The parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification also committed to improving the quality of life for women, girls, men and boys worldwide with the adoption, at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties, of a Gender Action Plan. To help deliver on the plan, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the United Nations Development Programme are pooling assets and exploiting their comparative advantages to achieve gender equality and are providing good stewardship of land resources.

45. Under the framework of the new drought initiative of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, a partnership with the World Meteorological Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme and the Global Water Partnership is taking

[4] Further details can be found at www.earthobservations.org/activity.php?id=149.

shape to harness synergies and identify opportunities to support national drought management plans development and the evolution of a practical drought mitigation toolbox.

46. The secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification continues to work with a number of donor partners to implement decisions and is expanding its partnership with non-traditional partners, including the private sector, with a focus on supply chain evolution and having local government authorities bring together the urban-rural agenda.

C. Observations and recommendations

47. In 2030, the international community will be brought to account regarding the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In order for that to be accomplished in 12 years, there is an urgent need to identify the targets that can accelerate progress and integrate the planned activities for multiple goals. In that respect, the General Assembly, in its resolutions 71/229 and 72/220, affirmed that achieving land degradation neutrality would act as an accelerator for achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals.

48. The General Assembly may wish, therefore, to reaffirm that achieving land degradation neutrality constitutes an accelerator to achieve other Sustainable Development Goals and responds to the overall objective of 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of leaving no one behind. Many Goals are directly linked to that target; it can therefore also serve as an integrator. The Assembly may wish to direct the organizations of the United Nations system, when designing and implementing their programmes, to take into account the role of land degradation neutrality as an accelerator to achieve other Goals.

49. Furthermore, the General Assembly, in its resolution 72/220, highlighted the Land Degradation Neutrality Fund, a unique public-private partnership, as an innovative funding scheme to finance the 2030 Agenda. This scheme could be replicated while serving as a vehicle for the increased commitment of private capital to land management and restoration. In addition, a large number of member States have adopted their land degradation neutrality target-setting programmes. As the next step towards preparing for transformative projects aimed at achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030, the Assembly may wish to call upon States Members and the rest of the international community to ensure the availability of the required resources, including from multiple sources. Finally, the issue of drought must be addressed in the context of achieving land degradation neutrality, otherwise all efforts in this regard will be in vain. The Assembly may therefore wish to call upon Member States to step up efforts to implement the strategic objective of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification on drought as called for by the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties in its decision 29/COP.13.

III. Report of the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity

A. Introduction

50. In its resolution 72/221, on the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its contribution to sustainable development, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly on the implementation of

the resolution at its seventy-third session, including on progress in the implementation of the Convention and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and difficulties encountered in the process of their implementation. The present report is submitted in response to that invitation.

B. Preparations for the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the meetings of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meetings of the Parties to the Protocols of the Convention

51. The fourteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity will be held concurrently in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, from 17 to 29 November 2018. The high-level segment of the meetings will be held on 14 and 15 November 2018. In preparation for the event, the subsidiary bodies of the Conference of the Parties have held meetings as follows.

1. Second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation

52. The second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation was held in Montreal, Canada, from 9 to 13 July 2018. The Subsidiary Body on Implementation was established at the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to replace the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Review of Implementation of the Convention, with a mandate to undertake four major functions: review progress in implementation; identify strategic actions to enhance implementation; strengthen support for implementation; and improve the efficiency of structures and processes in the operations of the Convention and its Protocols. The Subsidiary Body also serves the two protocols to the Convention, the Nagoya Protocol and the Cartagena Protocol Cartagena Protocol.

53. At the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body, inter alia, considered the following issues: a review of the progress in the implementation of the Convention and of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020; issues relating to different aspects in the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol; mainstreaming of biodiversity to enhance implementation; resource mobilization; financial mechanisms; capacity-building, technical and scientific cooperation and technology transfer; cooperation with other conventions, international organizations and initiatives; national reporting, under the Convention and its Protocols; enhancing integration provisions on access and benefit-sharing, biosafety and article 8 (j) of the Convention and its Protocols; preparation for the follow up to the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020; and engaging the private sector. The Subsidiary Body made recommendations for consideration and decision by the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

2. Twenty-first and twenty-second meetings of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice

54. The twenty-first meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice was held in Montreal, Canada, from 11 to 14 December 2017. The Subsidiary Body, inter alia, considered the following issues: scenarios for the 2050 Vision for Biodiversity; sustainable wildlife management; guidance for a sustainable wild meat sector; health and biodiversity; mainstreaming of biodiversity in the sectors of energy and mining, infrastructure, manufacturing and processing, and health; preparation of the fifth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook; tools to evaluate the effectiveness of policy instruments for the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020; and new and emerging issues relating to the conservation. The Subsidiary Body made recommendations for consideration and decision by the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

55. The twenty-second meeting of the Subsidiary Body was held in Montreal, Canada, from 2 to 7 July 2018. The Subsidiary Body, inter alia, considered the following issues: potential implications of the use of digital sequence information on genetic resources for the three objectives of the Convention and for the objective of the Nagoya Protocol; risk assessment and risk management of living modified organisms; synthetic biology; updated scientific assessment of progress towards selected Aichi Biodiversity Targets and options to accelerate progress; protected areas and other measures for enhanced conservation and management; scientific and technical matters relevant to marine biodiversity, including ecologically or biologically significant marine areas, addressing anthropogenic underwater noise and marine debris, biodiversity in cold-water areas, marine spatial planning and training initiatives; biodiversity and climate change; ecosystem-based approaches to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction; invasive alien species; conservation and sustainable use of pollinators and the second work programme of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. The Subsidiary Body made recommendations for consideration and decision by the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

3. Tenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intersessional Working Group on article 8 (j) and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity

56. At the tenth meeting of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Intersessional Working Group on article 8 (j) and Related Provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity that was held from 13 to 16 December 2017 in Montreal, Canada, a set of recommendations were agreed upon with regard to the contributions of indigenous peoples and local communities to the Convention on Biological Diversity. The recommendations from the meeting will be considered by the Conference of the Parties at its fourteenth meeting. The key recommendations included an agreement on the contribution of traditional knowledge to global biodiversity policy; and finalization of the Rutzolijirisaxik Voluntary Guidelines for the Repatriation of Traditional Knowledge Relevant for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity. This recommendation would facilitate the recovery of traditional knowledge held by museums and botanical gardens relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The issue of how the Voluntary Guidelines on Safeguards in Biodiversity Financing Mechanism could be taken into

account when selecting, designing and implementing biodiversity financing mechanisms was also discussed and will be further considered at the twenty-second meeting of the Subsidiary Body; the finalization of a draft glossary of terms and concepts within the context of article 8 (j), including "traditional knowledge" and "indigenous peoples and local communities community conservation areas"; recognition of the contribution of the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous peoples and local communities to the implementation of the Convention as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and future arrangements to further strengthen the role of indigenous peoples and local communities in the implementation of the Convention, including the future of the Working Group and its work programme after 2020.

C. Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity

57. As at 28 June 2018, the Nagoya Protocol had received 107 instruments of ratification, accession, approval or acceptance. Following the entry into force of the Protocol in October 2014, efforts have been focused on further advancing the implementation of the Protocol.

58. A number of intersessional activities have been convened following the decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol at its second meeting. These include the second meeting of the Compliance Committee under the Protocol; an ad hoc technical expert group meeting on digital sequence information on genetic resources; and meetings of the informal advisory committees on capacity-building and the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House. The outcomes of these efforts have contributed to the work conducted by the subsidiary bodies and will be made available for the consideration by the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol at its third meeting.

59. In accordance with article 29 of the Protocol, parties were requested to submit an interim national report on the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol 12 months prior to the third meeting of the Parties. Non-parties were also invited to submit relevant information. As at 3 July 2018, 75 parties to the Nagoya Protocol and six non-parties had submitted a report.

60. Moreover, in accordance with article 31 of the Nagoya Protocol, the parties to the Protocol, at their third meeting, will undertake an assessment and review of the effectiveness of the Nagoya Protocol, taking into account information made available through the interim national reports, the Access and Benefit-sharing Clearing-House and other sources of information. This will be the first opportunity to assess the progress in the implementation of the Protocol.

61. Further efforts to support the implementation of the Nagoya Protocol have included improvements made to the Access and Benefit-Sharing Clearing-House and a number of capacity-building activities, including the development of e-learning modules and training courses.

D. Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity

62. At the time of writing, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety had received 171 instruments of ratification, accession, approval or acceptance.

63. Preparations for the ninth meeting of the Conference of Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol, include the deliberations of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation and the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice, the meetings of the compliance committee, the twelfth meeting of the Liaison Group on Capacity-Building for Biosafety, the eleventh meeting of the Informal Advisory Committee on the Biosafety Clearing-House, meetings of the network of laboratories focusing on the detection and identification of living modified organisms on unintentional transboundary movements, and emergency measures as meetings of the Ad Hoc Technical Expert Group on article 26 (socioeconomic considerations).

E. Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety

64. The Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety entered into force on 5 March 2018, 90 days after the deposit of the fortieth instrument of acceptance by Japan in December 2017.

65. Adopted on 15 October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan, as a supplementary agreement to the Cartagena Protocol, the Supplementary Protocol is aimed at contributing to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity by providing international rules and procedures in the field of liability and redress relating to living modified organisms. The Supplementary Protocol requires that response measures be taken in the event of damage resulting from living modified organisms or where there is sufficient likelihood that damage will result if timely response measures are not taken. The Supplementary Protocol also includes provisions in relation to civil liability.

66. Article 14, paragraph 1, of the Supplementary Protocol provides that the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol shall serve as the Meeting of the Parties to the Supplementary Protocol, therefore issues relating to the implementation of the Supplementary Protocol will be considered at the ninth Conference of the Parties.

F. Progress made in the implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and difficulties encountered in the process of implementation

67. The recent regional assessment reports by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services found that biodiversity was in decline in all regions of the world. Assessments carried out to prepare for the second meeting of the Subsidiary Body on Implementation, on the basis of information submitted by parties in their national reports, suggest that the majority of the parties have made progress towards the Aichi Targets. Efforts have been made by most parties to translate the Aichi Biodiversity Targets into national commitments, and national actions have been taken to reach the Aichi Targets with support from the Global Environment Fund, the Japan Biodiversity Fund, and other funds and donors. However, these commitments and efforts will need to be significantly scaled up if the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and, more generally, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020, are to be met. The information from this analysis is broadly consistent with the information presented in the fourth edition of the Global Biodiversity Outlook, which concluded that while progress was being made towards the achievement of all targets, progress was not currently sufficient to achieve the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and that additional action was required to keep the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 on course. The United Nations Decade on Biological

Diversity has been set in place by the General Assembly to greatly enhance the effort for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity towards 2020. The efforts should be further encouraged through this framework as well.

G. International Day for Biological Diversity

68. The United Nations proclaimed that the International Day for Biological Diversity should be commemorated annually on 22 May as a means of raising awareness about biodiversity. Since 2018 marks the 25th anniversary of the entry into force of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the theme for the 2018 commemoration of the Day was "Celebrating 25 years of action for biodiversity". The global observance event was organized in Montreal, Canada with the participation of senior officials from the Government of Canada, the province of Quebec, the city of Montreal, representatives of the diplomatic corps and dignitaries from around the world. Speaking on the occasion, the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity noted that there was much to celebrate:

> Significant areas of the world are now being conserved as part of protected areas. We have seen enormous improvements in governance models and sustainable use approaches to manage key natural resources. The value of biodiversity for society, our social and economic needs as well as our own health and well-being, are now widely recognized. Furthermore, biodiversity lies at the heart of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development.

69. The Executive Secretary also noted that despite the progress made, biodiversity has continued to decline, compounding and accelerating other global challenges, and that new incentive models and engagement with relevant actors were required to halt biodiversity loss and safeguard natural assets.

70. In his message for the occasion, the Secretary-General emphasized that the rich variety of life on Earth was essential for the welfare and prosperity of people today and for generations to come. He emphasized that protecting and restoring ecosystems and ensuring access to ecosystem services were necessary for the eradication of extreme poverty and mitigating climate change. He urged Governments, businesses and people everywhere: "to act to protect the nature that sustains us. Our collective future depends on it".

H. Recommendations

71. The General Assembly, at its seventy-third session, may wish, inter alia:

(a) To stress the importance of follow up to and implementation of the outcomes of the 3the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity and the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties serving as the Meeting of the Parties to the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(b) To call upon all parties to scale up efforts to implement the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets;

(c) To invite all parties and relevant United Nations departments, specialized agencies, funds, programmes and regional commissions to contribute to the

achievement of the objectives of the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity 2011–2020;

(d) To call upon all States that have not yet done so, to ratify or accede to the Convention on Biological Diversity;

(e) To call upon all parties to the Convention that have not yet done so, to ratify or accede to the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety;

(f) To call upon all parties to the Convention that have not yet done so, to ratify or accede to the Nagoya-Kuala Lumpur Supplementary Protocol on Liability and Redress;

(g) To call upon all parties to the Convention that have not yet done so, to ratify or accede to Nagoya Protocol.